Abstract

The internal word order in bipartite verb clusters including a past participle in Dutch subordinate clauses shows considerable variation. Dutch allows the so-called red word order (auxiliary - past participle) as in: '*Ik geloof niet dat hij het heeft gedaan*' as well as the so-called green word order (past participle - auxiliary) as in: '*Ik geloof niet dat hij het gedaan heeft*'. Modern German, however, only allows the green word order with the auxiliary after the past participle.

The aim of this investigation is to describe the frequencies of the different word orders and to identify the factors that cause a higher-than-average preference for either red or green word order in bipartite verb clusters including a past participle in Dutch subordinate clauses in order to explain and predict divergences.

The investigation is based on a random selection of written material from the INL-corpus in Leiden. A sample of 3,642 bipartite verb clusters including a past participle in subordinate clauses was analyzed and annotated with values for the response variable (i.e. red or green word order) as well as the values for ten different explanation variables. The interrelations between the variables were studied statistically and recurrent patterns documented.

The results from this investigation clearly show that the 'rhythmic structure of the past participle' (i.e. the *hat model*) is the most determining factor for divergent internal word order in the bipartite verb cluster. There is an increased percentage of red word order for initially-stressed past participles ^-- (as in *opgebeld*), and an increased percentage of green word order for past participles with final stress --^ (as in *gestudeerd*). Language users strive for a balance between stressed (^) and unstressed (-) elements and variation of word order in the bipartite verb cluster can be used in order to achieve this balance. A past participle with balance already looks like a hat -^-. Consequently, these balanced past participles are more influenced by other explanation variables.
An element with strong stress immediately before the verb cluster increases the likelihood for red word order; particularly with initially-stressed participles, in which case the two variables combine for enhanced effect. Similarly, an element with weak stress immediately before the verb cluster increases the likelihood of green word order; particularly with finally-stressed participles. An extraposition also influences the choice of word order in the preceding verb cluster. If the extraposition is obligatory it is also anticipated and more heavily stressed than an optional subsequent element. If the verb cluster includes a finally-stressed past participle there is an increased preference for green word order.
There is a clear hierarchy of explanation variables. The rhythmic factors are the most important and clearly interact with each other. Other significant factors are 'type of text' and 'syntactic persistence', which interact neither with each other nor with the rhythmic factors.

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Written by:	Mona Arfs, University of Gothenburg, Sweden, Department of German and Dutch, 2007
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